



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

TSA Procurement Reform: Saving Taxpayer Dollars Through Smarter Spending Practices

May 8, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security Subcommittee hearing entitled “TSA Procurement Reform: Saving Taxpayer Dollars Through Smarter Spending Practices”:

“Last year, TSA spent 2.39 billion dollars on goods and services. As a Member who has conducted extensive oversight of TSA’s procurement practices as both Chairman and Ranking Member of the Full Committee, I appreciate the Chairman’s desire to take a close look at how TSA spends taxpayer dollars.

Upon its creation in 2001, TSA was provided wide-ranging spending flexibility in the form of an exemption from the Federal Acquisition Regulations, commonly referred to as the FAR.

TSA was also exempt from major procurement laws such as the Competition in Contracting Act and the Small Business Act.

In 2008, Congress acted to end TSA’s exemption from the FAR, more closely aligning TSA’s procurement authority with that of the rest of the Federal Government.

This was done in an effort to level the playing field for small businesses and prevent the mismanagement and waste of taxpayer dollars.

Unfortunately, five years later, and despite being bound by the FAR, challenges remain with TSA’s procurement activities.

As evidenced by the ongoing removal of 40 million dollars worth of recently purchased AIT machines from the field due to privacy and performance concerns, TSA continues to spend taxpayer dollars without conducting due diligence.

With the budgetary constraints we face today, it is critical that every dollar TSA spends goes toward technologies and services that work and make our transportation systems more secure.

I am also interested in hearing how TSA is working with small businesses to enhance their opportunities to contract with the agency.

While I appreciate that TSA has established a Small and Disadvantaged Business Office, I am concerned that the agency failed to reach its goal for contracting with small businesses in 2012.

I look forward to hearing Ms. Shelton-Waters plan for ensuring this shortfall is not repeated in 2013.

Small businesses serve as both critical job creators and innovators in our society and TSA should make certain that it takes full advantage of opportunities to do business with them.

During our discussion today, Mr. Chairman, I hope the Subcommittee remains mindful of the taxpayer dollars TSA spends on services as well as goods.

Based on data provided by TSA, over the past five years, it has cost taxpayers an additional 75 million dollars to maintain contract screeners in the Screening Partnership Program over what it would have cost to provide security with TSOs.

Whatever your thoughts on the use of private versus federal screeners, we cannot afford to pay a premium for comparable services.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>